

## Section 4

# VISION AND GOALS

This chapter defines the vision and goals for development in the Normandale Lake District over the next 20 years. The vision and goals establish a framework to guide public and private investment consistent with the City's aspirations to realize the District's potential as an employment center, residential neighborhood, recreation destination, and gateway to Bloomington.

### 4.1 Vision: "The Big Idea"

To position the entire District to gain maximum benefit from private and public investments, the vision for the District is to:

***Continue to develop as a high quality, high density mixed use area in a manner that extends, reinforces and celebrates the natural environment.***

Three primary goals to achieve this vision include:

- Expand the **park-like character**.
- Improve **identity and connectivity**.
- Achieve a more **visually cohesive built environment**.

Each goal is discussed in more detail on the following pages.



#### What makes the Normandale Lake Area unique?

- Regional destination.
- Bloomington gateway.
- Planned high quality, high intensity, mixed use area.
- Natural character and landscape.



## Goal 1 Expand the park-like character.



Create green networks.

The District's existing natural systems (parks and open space, Normandale Lake, Nine Mile Creek, woodlands and wetlands) lend a natural character to the area. Historically, development in the District has inconsistently responded to existing natural systems. Development west of Normandale Boulevard has incorporated the existing creek, wetlands, and wooded areas whereas development east of Normandale Boulevard reflects older suburban development patterns with large expanses of pavement devoted to surface parking and no provisions for infiltrating stormwater.

Normandale Lake, with its open vistas and trails, Nine-Mile Creek and associated wetlands and area woodlands contribute to the area's park-like character. A primary goal is to extend this character throughout the District to enhance its aesthetic value and distinctiveness.

Expanding the park-like character will involve:

- Establishing a connected network of open space.
- Creating visual and physical connections between Normandale Lake Park and the MnDOT stormwater pond.
- Enhancing landscaping along streets and other public areas.
- Integrating stormwater treatment facilities to create a "green" network.

## Goal 2 Improve District identity and connectivity.



Enhance the design and function of public streets, sidewalks and paths.

The District encompasses major employment, recreational, and retail destinations. As a result, the area draws a substantial amount of vehicle traffic, which necessitates a system of multiple-lane roads. These roads can present barriers to pedestrians and bicyclists wanting to access the park and businesses in the area.

Currently pedestrian and bike traffic can move about within the District using existing sidewalks and trails along the roads and around Normandale Lake. However, not all road segments include sidewalks or trails to accommodate pedestrian traffic. Breaks in sidewalk and trail continuity and inconsistent design (width, pavement quality, separation from vehicle traffic) make it difficult for pedestrians and bicyclists to travel through the entire District comfortably and safely.

Located at the interchange of I-494 and TH 100 (Normandale Boulevard), the District functions as a gateway to northwest Bloomington. Establishing a consistent design character through coordinated use of streetscape elements, building materials and signs can improve visual cohesiveness and create a distinct identity for the District.

Improving identity and connectivity will involve:

- Installing a complete system of sidewalks and trails.
- Building a visually distinctive pedestrian bridge over Normandale Boulevard that emphasizes the District's gateway function.
- Creating trail connections between Normandale Lake Park and the MnDOT stormwater pond.
- Installing streetscaping along roads using a consistent palette of plants, lighting, and sidewalk/trail pavement material.
- Installing a coordinated system of public wayfinding signs throughout the District.

## Goal 3 Achieve a more visually cohesive built environment.

Building materials, architectural styles and scale, and site planning decisions define the character and visual quality of the built environment. Enhancing the overall cohesiveness of the built environment can be achieved by coordinating private site planning and building design decisions with public efforts to enhance the public realm (i.e., streetscaping, wayfinding signs).

Creating a visually cohesive built environment will involve:

- Establishing area-specific design guidelines to address building height, massing, setbacks, and exterior materials.
- Defining a list of desired materials for landscaping and streetscape enhancements.
- Continued enforcement of existing sign regulations.
- Earmarking funding for on-going maintenance of public areas and facilities.



**Adopt design guidelines to ensure attractive development.**





## 4.2 Objectives

Eleven objectives were defined to achieve the District's vision and goals. These objectives express the values that the community has indicated are important factors to consider in making planning and development decisions in the District.

### Objective 1

#### **Foster intense and compact development.**

The west side of the District contains a concentration of premiere office space that serves as a regional employment center. Concentrating high density office development in this area allows for efficient use of existing regional and local road and utility infrastructure. There is tremendous opportunity to establish a mix of mutually supportive uses on the east side of the District that would serve the office park, hotels, and the surrounding residential neighborhoods. Making development more compact promotes pedestrian activity and can enhance economic synergies.

### Objective 2

#### **Maintain and enhance the public realm.**

Streets, sidewalks and trails, open spaces and park facilities are the common spaces that bind the District together. Public spaces should convey the City's commitment to high quality development and reinforce the area's identity. Making a commitment to finance and maintain public realm improvements is critical.

### Objective 3

#### **Foster revitalization.**

The City will continue to support and encourage redevelopment that capitalizes on existing investments and amenities in the District. Revitalization should also strengthen adjacent single-family neighborhoods, promote connections to area parks and natural areas, and enhance the ecological integrity of the natural resources in the area.



## Objective 4

### Ensure visual and functional continuity.

Redevelopment of property in the District offers an opportunity to achieve greater balance in the physical character and profile of the east and west sides of the District. Providing continuity in the built environment (architecture, streetscape, signage) through use of street and building design guidelines will help establish a more balanced and visually unified district, allowing the District to appear and function as a whole.



## Objective 5

### Create a distinct district identity.

Located at the interchange of I-494 and Normandale Boulevard (TH 100), the Normandale Lakes area serves as a gateway to the City. Normandale Lake is a prominent visual landmark, making the area immediately recognizable and providing an attractive “front yard” to the surrounding office park development. The cluster of distinctive, tall office buildings are also recognizable landmarks in the area. Creating a distinct identity for the District will involve building on the existing natural character and high-quality of development in the area.

## Objective 6

### Design with nature.

Natural features are a prominent component of the landscape in and around the District and have directly influenced the pattern of development, particularly where Nine Mile Creek winds through the west side of the District. Design with nature means developing in a manner that protects and enhances the natural resources in the area by treating existing natural features as assets and utilizing techniques such as low-impact design and best management practices.



## Objective 7

### Encourage sustainable and balanced development.

The Normandale Lake District possesses a number of desirable characteristics, notably visually prominent natural features and a number of high-quality developments. Preserving and enhancing these assets will be critical to sustain the character and value of the District and surrounding neighborhoods. Integrating natural features, using high-quality and energy-efficient design, fostering a synergistic mix of land uses, and establishing a prominent public realm are all important aspects of sustainable and balanced development.

### Objective 8

#### **Provide a high level of access and connections.**

The District serves visitors and employees from around the region as well as neighborhood residents. Providing safe and convenient access and circulation for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists will be critical to the area's success. Access to the regional road network will become increasingly important as the area continues to grow and intensify. Improving access to the regional highway system and improvements to local streets, sidewalks and trails can enhance connectivity to and between the various destinations in the area.



### Objective 9

#### **Ensure sensitivity to residential neighborhoods.**

There are a variety of residential neighborhoods in and around the District. These areas are a vital component of the District. While the District will continue to develop and change, protecting and maintaining the livability of residential neighborhoods is a high priority. This will require the provision of a well-designed and safe circulation system for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists, site buffering and landscaping, and careful attention to building design.

### Objective 10

#### **Emphasize quality, comfort, and safety.**

Deriving long term value from public investments is typically achieved through high quality design and construction. Investing in a well-designed public realm can reduce long-term maintenance costs and will result in the creation of attractive public spaces that feel safe and comfortable, enhance property values, and improve livability.

### Objective 11

#### **Commitment to implement and maintain.**

Public spaces and facilities that are well cared for tend to retain their public value and function for longer periods of time. Committing adequate resources to maintain public improvements from the outset of a project will ensure that community expectations regarding the physical condition of streets, trails, and parks are met.